

Testimony on H.B. No. 5416
An Act Concerning the Air Line Trail

Submitted to the Environment Committee

By Dan Dachelet

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My family and I are avid users of the trail system in Haddam. The trails in our area are picturesque and great for long walks, but they are challenging for bikers due to uneven terrain and rocks. Riding on the roads in our town is flat out dangerous. I'm a volunteer firefighter and have responded to too many accidents with bicyclists on our narrow and windy roads. I won't allow my kids on them.

Our only option for safe family bike trips is to head out to the Farmington trail and Air Line trail on the weekends. However, packing up a families worth of bikes is daunting and doesn't happen near as often as it should. This state has got to get its act together regarding safe transportation corridors for it's populace. I've lived in numerous states around the U.S. thanks to Uncle Sam, and Connecticut is by far the most backwards in regards to supporting non-motorized passenger corridors. How do you rebuild the Farmington Ave corridor in West Hartford without a bike lane and then connect it to one WITH a bike lane in Hartford. Your transportation engineers must sit down at the table with your land use planners and always consider how to add safe passage for bikes and pedestrians any time construction is done.

That said, we now have an opportunity to connect one of the states best kept secrets to towns west of the Connecticut River. College students in Middletown without cars could venture for the first time over the Arigoni bridge. Dream a little bigger and people from towns on the shoreline can drive a short ways to Eagle's Landing state park and take a day trip along the CT River, grab lunch in Middletown and then continue on to Portland and onto the Air Line Trail. Why have we had an abandoned railroad sit dormant since 1969 that was intended to be used for recreational purposes. Let's get the Air Line Trail connected to more towns in Connecticut and find a way to better use areas like the northern portion of the Valley Railroad leased property. Compared to other topics that your legislature is facing this winter, this is simply a no brainer.

Regards,
Dan Dachelet

Haddam Trails
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